

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

John Lige,  
Plaintiff  
v.  
Clark County,  
Defendant

2:16-cv-00603-JAD-PAL

## **Order Granting in Part Motion for Summary Judgment**

[ECF Nos. 100, 111]

10 John Lige has been working for Clark County's news-racks-enforcement department for  
11 more than a decade. He sues his employer for racial and gender discrimination, retaliation, and  
12 violating his civil right to make and enforce contracts.<sup>1</sup> Clark County moves for summary  
13 judgment on all claims except the civil-rights one,<sup>2</sup> and after considering both parties' arguments,  
14 I grant the motion in part. This case proceeds to trial only on the discrimination and civil-rights  
15 claims.

## Discussion

17 In his second-amended complaint, Lige alleges 18 claims, some against Clark County and  
18 others against the Service Employees International Union, Local 1107 (SEIU). The claims  
19 against the SEIU were dismissed with prejudice.<sup>3</sup> Four of the remaining claims are identically  
20 mirrored by another four—one side grounded in federal law and the other in Nevada’s state-law  
21 analogs<sup>4</sup>—and the final claim is Lige’s civil-rights one.<sup>5</sup> As I discuss in each corresponding

<sup>1</sup> ECF No. 79.

<sup>2</sup> ECF No. 100.

<sup>3</sup> ECE No. 79

<sup>4</sup> See generally ECF No. 26.

<sup>5</sup> ECF No. 26 at 22

1 section,<sup>6</sup> Lige’s state-law discrimination and retaliation claims are evaluated under analogous  
2 federal-law standards. So, I divide this discussion into five distinct claims: (1) racial  
3 discrimination; (2) sex discrimination; (3) hostile-work-environment retaliation; (4) failure-to-  
4 promote retaliation; and (5) civil-rights violations.

5 **A. Summary-judgment standard**

6 Summary judgment is appropriate when the pleadings and admissible evidence “show  
7 [that] there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the movant is entitled to judgment  
8 as a matter of law.”<sup>7</sup> When considering summary judgment, the court views all facts and draws  
9 all inferences in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party.<sup>8</sup> If reasonable minds could  
10 differ on material facts, summary judgment is inappropriate because its purpose is to avoid  
11 unnecessary trials when the facts are undisputed, and the case must then proceed to the trier of  
12 fact.<sup>9</sup>

13 If the moving party satisfies Rule 56 by demonstrating the absence of any genuine issue  
14 of material fact, the burden shifts to the party resisting summary judgment to “set forth specific  
15 facts showing that there is a genuine issue for trial.”<sup>10</sup> The nonmoving party “must do more than  
16 simply show that there is some metaphysical doubt as to the material facts”; he “must produce  
17 specific evidence, through affidavits or admissible discovery material, to show that” there is a  
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21     <sup>6</sup> Neither the complaint, nor the briefing—from either party—on this summary-judgment motion  
22 are models of organization or clarity, and the parties consistently fail to address portions of each  
23 other’s arguments.

24     <sup>7</sup> See *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 330 (1986) (citing FED. R. CIV. P. 56(c)).

25     <sup>8</sup> *Kaiser Cement Corp. v. Fishbach & Moore, Inc.*, 793 F.2d 1100, 1103 (9th Cir. 1986).

26     <sup>9</sup> *Warren v. City of Carlsbad*, 58 F.3d 439, 441 (9th Cir. 1995); see also *Nw. Motorcycle Ass’n v.*  
27 *U.S. Dep’t of Agric.*, 18 F.3d 1468, 1471 (9th Cir. 1994).

28     <sup>10</sup> *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 256 (1986); *Celotex*, 477 U.S. at 323.

1 sufficient evidentiary basis on which a reasonable fact finder could find in his favor.<sup>11</sup>

2 **B. Motion to supplement opposition brief**

3 Lige moves for leave to supplement his opposition to Clark County's summary-judgment  
4 motion.<sup>12</sup> Counsel represents that despite efforts to contact Lige's former supervisor Gary  
5 Loberg for a declaration before the response deadline, Loberg did not respond until days after the  
6 deadline had already passed.<sup>13</sup> Lige asked Clark County to stipulate to allow him to supplement  
7 his opposition, but the County declined. Lige also argues that Clark County will not be  
8 prejudiced because he disclosed Loberg as a witness in his initial disclosure, Clark County chose  
9 not to depose Loberg, and the County has the declaration in its possession already.<sup>14</sup> Clark  
10 County does not oppose Lige's motion. I construe that lack of opposition as the County's  
11 consent to grant it,<sup>15</sup> grant the motion, and consider Loberg's declaration in deciding this  
12 motion.<sup>16</sup>

13 **C. Discrimination**

14 Lige brings his race- and sex-discrimination claims under Title VII and NRS 613.330.<sup>17</sup>

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18 <sup>11</sup> *Bank of Am. v. Orr*, 285 F.3d 764, 783 (9th Cir. 2002) (internal citations omitted); *Bhan v. NME Hospo., Inc.*, 929 F.2d 1404, 1409 (9th Cir. 1991); *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 248–49.

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20 <sup>12</sup> ECF No. 111.

21 <sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 2.

22 <sup>14</sup> *Id.*

23 <sup>15</sup> See L.R. 7-2(d) (“The failure of an opposing party to file points and authorities in response to  
24 any motion, except a motion under Fed. R. Civ. P. 56 or a motion for attorney's fees, constitutes  
25 a consent to the granting of the motion.”).

26 <sup>16</sup> My consideration of Loberg's declaration does not change the outcome of this summary-  
27 judgment matter. It merely bolsters my decision—along with Lige's already-proffered  
evidence—to grant it in part and deny it in part.

28 <sup>17</sup> ECF No. 26 at 14–18.

1 Section 613.330 of the Nevada Revised Statutes is a state-law analog to federal Title VII.<sup>18</sup> And  
2 whether the claim is brought under Title VII or NRS 613.330, the analysis is the same.<sup>19</sup> In the  
3 pathmaking case of *McDonnell Douglas Corporation v. Green*,<sup>20</sup> the United States Supreme  
4 Court established a burden-shifting framework for courts to apply to Title VII-discrimination  
5 claims.<sup>21</sup> “A discrimination complainant must first establish a prima facie case of disparate  
6 treatment.”<sup>22</sup> “In general, a plaintiff must present evidence of ‘actions taken by the employer  
7 from which one can infer, if such actions remain unexplained, that it is more likely than not that  
8 such action was based upon race or another impermissible criterion.’”<sup>23</sup> If the plaintiff presents a  
9 prima facie case, “the burden shifts to the defendant to produce some evidence demonstrating a  
10 legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason for the employee’s [treatment].”<sup>24</sup> And if the defendant  
11 meets that burden, “any presumption that the defendant discriminated ‘drops from the case,’ and  
12 the plaintiff must then show that the defendant’s alleged reason for [the treatment] was merely a  
13 pretext for discrimination.”<sup>25</sup> Lige alleges two types of discrimination: race and sex.

14       1.     ***Race discrimination***

15       Lige’s race-discrimination claim is primarily brought under a hostile-work-environment

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17       <sup>18</sup> *Pope v. Motel 6*, 114 P.3d 277, 280 (Nev. 2005) (“In light of the similarity between Title VII of  
18 the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Nevada’s anti discrimination statutes, we have previously looked  
19 to the federal courts for guidance in discrimination cases.”); *see also Apeceche v. White Pine  
Cnty.*, 615 P.2d 975, 977 (Nev. 1980) (holding that “NRS 613.330(1) is almost identical to §  
703(a)(1) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1)”).

20       <sup>19</sup> *Id.*

21       <sup>20</sup> *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792 (1973).

22       <sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 802.

23       <sup>22</sup> *Bodett v. CoxCom, Inc.*, 366 F.3d 736, 743 (9th Cir. 2004) (internal citations and quotations  
24 omitted).

25       <sup>23</sup> *Id.* (quoting *Gay v. Waiters’ Union*, 694 F.2d 531, 538 (9th Cir. 1982)).

26       <sup>24</sup> *Id.*

27       <sup>25</sup> *Id.*

1 theory. Title VII makes it “an unlawful employment practice for an employer . . . to fail or refuse  
2 to hire or to discharge any individual or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with  
3 respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of [his]  
4 race.”<sup>26</sup> But “the scope of the prohibition is not limited to economic or tangible  
5 discrimination,”<sup>27</sup> and “it covers more than terms and conditions in the narrow contractual  
6 sense.”<sup>28</sup> Racial harassment that is “so severe or pervasive” that it alters the conditions of  
7 employment and creates an abusive working environment violates Title VII.<sup>29</sup> An abusive  
8 working environment is one that “a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive”<sup>30</sup> and that  
9 the employee did find hostile or abusive.<sup>31</sup> To determine whether an environment is abusive,  
10 courts look “at all the circumstances, including the frequency of the discriminatory conduct; its  
11 severity; whether it is physically threatening or humiliating, or a mere offensive utterance; and  
12 whether it unreasonably interferes with an employee’s work performance.”<sup>32</sup> “[S]imple teasing,  
13 offhand comments, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not amount to  
14 discriminatory changes in the terms and conditions of employment.”<sup>33</sup> And the United States  
15 Supreme Court has consistently rejected “any conclusive presumption that an employer will not

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17 <sup>26</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1).

18 <sup>27</sup> *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 524 U.S. 775, 786 (1998) (citing *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 510 U.S. 17, 21 (1993), and *Meritor Savings Bank, FSB v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57, 64 (1986))  
19 (internal quotations and citations omitted).

20 <sup>28</sup> *Id.* (citing *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Servs., Inc.*, 523 U.S. 75, 78 (1998)).

21 <sup>29</sup> *Faragher*, 524 U.S. at 786 (applying rule to sex-discrimination claims and citing *Rogers v. EEOC*, 454 F.2d 234 (5th Cir. 1971) *cert. denied*, 406 U.S. 957 (1972), and *Firefighters Institute for Racial Equality v. St. Louis*, 549 F.2d 506 (8th Cir. 1977), *cert. denied sub nom. Banta v. United States*, 434 U.S. 819 (1977) for race-discrimination claims).

22 <sup>30</sup> *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, 510 U.S. 17, 21 (1993).

23 <sup>31</sup> *Faragher*, 524 U.S. at 777 (citing *Harris*, 510 U.S. at 21–22).

24 <sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 777–78 (citing *Harris*, 510 U.S. at 23).

25 <sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 788 (internal quotations omitted).

1 discriminate against members of his own race.”<sup>34</sup>

2       Clark County argues in a single, three-sentence conclusory paragraph that “[Lige’s] First  
3 Amended Complaint is devoid of **any** factual allegations that he was subjected to any repeated or  
4 objectively severe conduct by **any** Clark County employees. Being required to perform your job  
5 duties does not qualify as hostile and severe conduct. Here, there is simply no actionable claim  
6 for hostile work environment.”<sup>35</sup>

7       That Lige’s complaint is devoid of hostile-work-environment facts is just not true. Lige  
8 alleges and supports with declarations and deposition testimony from himself, Rosemary Haynes,  
9 and Loberg, that his supervisor Christopher Bramley told the African-American employees that  
10 he didn’t trust them,<sup>36</sup> got into fierce arguments with them but not with non-African-American  
11 employees,<sup>37</sup> and screamed at Lige in front of other employees on at least one occasion;<sup>38</sup> and that  
12 Loberg specifically “was concerned with Christopher Bramley’s ability to supervise different  
13 kinds of people.”<sup>39</sup> Lige also provides evidence that Scott Trierweiler—another  
14 supervisor—raised his fist towards Lige during an altercation in the parking lot,<sup>40</sup> and told a part-  
15 time Caucasian employee that he would try and “get rid” of another employee to make him full-  
16 time.<sup>41</sup> And there is evidence that Lige was disciplined for using a County vehicle for personal  
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18       <sup>34</sup> *Oncale*, 523 U.S. at 78 (citing *Castaneda v. Partida*, 430 U.S. 482, 499 (1977) (“Because of  
19 the many facets of human motivation, it would be unwise to presume as a matter of law that  
20 human beings of one definable group will not discriminate against other members of their  
group.”)).

21       <sup>35</sup> ECF No. 100 at 13.

22       <sup>36</sup> ECF No. 108 at 14.

23       <sup>37</sup> *Id.*

24       <sup>38</sup> ECF No. 109-9 at 3–4.

25       <sup>39</sup> ECF No. 111-2 at 3–4.

26       <sup>40</sup> ECF No. 108 at 8.

27       <sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 6–7.

1 use, while a Caucasian employee was not disciplined for similar misconduct on another  
2 occasion.<sup>42</sup>

3 Viewing this evidence in the light most favorable to Lige, a reasonable jury could  
4 conclude that these instances are sufficiently “severe and pervasive” to create a hostile work  
5 environment of racial discrimination. So, I cannot grant summary judgment in the County’s  
6 favor on these race-discrimination claims. I now turn to Lige’s sex-discrimination claims.

7 **2. *Sex discrimination***

8 Title VII also makes it “an unlawful employment practice for an employer . . . to  
9 discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or  
10 privileges of employment, because of [his] . . . sex.”<sup>43</sup> To present a *prima facie* case of sex or  
11 gender discrimination, Lige must show that his “compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of  
12 employment” were different than those of a female co-worker’s, and that sex was a motivating  
13 factor in that difference.<sup>44</sup> Title VII does not bar sex-discrimination claims “merely because the  
14 plaintiff and the defendant (or the person charged with acting on behalf of the defendant) are of  
15 the same sex.”<sup>45</sup>

16 To support his sex-discrimination claim, Lige paints a scenario in which one female  
17 employee has been excused from the more physically challenging duties of the engineering-  
18 technician job requirements. He explains that Rosemary Haynes applied for an engineering-  
19 technician position in the news-racks department. She openly stated several times that she “was  
20 not willing to perform the same back-breaking labor” that Lige did. The position was offered to  
21 Anderson, a male applicant, and Haynes filed some sort of workplace-discrimination

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23 <sup>42</sup> *Id.* at 13.

24 <sup>43</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1) (2012).

25 <sup>44</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(m) (2012) (“Except as otherwise provided in this subchapter, an unlawful  
26 employment practice is established when the complaining party demonstrates that race, color,  
27 religion, sex, or national origin was a motivating factor for any employment practice, even  
though other factors also motivated the practice.”).

28 <sup>45</sup> *Oncale*, 523 U.S. at 79.

1 charge—though not a gender-discrimination charge—with the Office of Diversity (OOD), and  
2 the OOD determined that Haynes should have been offered the position. When Anderson  
3 vacated that position, Haynes took his place. Haynes taking Anderson’s place, Lige attests, was  
4 sex discrimination against Lige because the County hired a female that openly opposed  
5 performing physical labor, leaving Lige to do it all himself.<sup>46</sup> I construe from this theory that the  
6 alleged discrimination is actually that the County made Lige, a man, do physical labor but the  
7 same work was not demanded of Haynes, a woman.<sup>47</sup>

8       Clark County argues that Lige cannot present a *prima facie* case of sex discrimination  
9 because he “has absolutely no objective evidence to support his claims that he was a victim of . .  
10 . sex discrimination.”<sup>48</sup> The County urges that Lige’s “allegation that . . . he has to perform more

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12       <sup>46</sup> ECF No. 108 at 15:16–25.

13       <sup>47</sup> Lige offers two other reasons, which appears to be an attempt to establish a pattern-or-practice  
14 theory. Lige argues that Haynes will testify that two Clark County employees told her that “it’s  
15 no use in going up to the Office of Diversity and getting things done because if you’re not  
16 Rosemary or a black [or] Asian female, they’re not going to listen to you.” *Id.* at 16. This  
17 statement appears to be inadmissible hearsay, and Lige has not offered a basis for its admission at  
18 trial, so I exercise my discretion to disregard it. FED. R. CIV. P. 56(c)(2); *see also Bank of Am. v.*  
*Orr*, 285 F.3d 764, 783 (9th Cir. 2002); *Bhan v. NME Hosps., Inc.*, 929 F.2d 1404, 14009 (9th  
Cir. 1991); *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 248–49 (evidence must be admissible to be considered on  
summary judgment).

19       Second, Lige offers one other incident of sex discrimination within the County, suggesting that it  
20 demonstrates that the County is engaging in a pattern of sex discrimination. ECF No. 108 at 16  
21 (citing *United States of America v. Clark County*, case no. 2:14-cv-00493-RFB-NJK). But that  
22 other incident involved a different department and completely different facts from the instant  
23 one. “To prove a systemwide, pattern-or-practice of discrimination, [Lige] must prove, by a  
24 preponderance of the evidence, that the sexual harassment was [Clark County’s] ‘standard  
25 operating procedure,’ rather than isolated incidents.” *United States EEOC v. Scolari Warehouse*  
*Markets, Inc.*, 488 F. Supp. 2d 1117, 1129–30 (D. Nev. 2007) (citing *Int’l Brotherhood of*  
*Teamsters v. U.S.*, 431 U.S. 324, 336 (1977)); *see also Obrey v. Johnson*, 400 F.3d 691, 694 (9th  
Cir. 2005)). Lige makes no effort to demonstrate that his sole other incident—in a municipality  
26 that employs thousands of people and involving a different department, different employees, and  
27 wage discrimination—is anything more than an unrelated, isolated incident. So, both of these  
theories lack merit.

28       <sup>48</sup> ECF No. 100 at 11:11–12.

1 physical labor than [female employees do] is without merit" because "Rosemary Haynes, an  
2 African-American female, also physically handled news racks."<sup>49</sup> The County supports this  
3 statement with Bramley's deposition testimony.<sup>50</sup>

4 Lige counters that Haynes "did not go out into the field" for much of her time in the  
5 news-racks department.<sup>51</sup> He also states that Haynes told him that "the handful of times the  
6 County sent her to the field [were] to keep up appearances."<sup>52</sup> Loberg's supplemental declaration  
7 challenges Bramley's credibility<sup>53</sup> and bolsters Lige's own declaration that Haynes would not  
8 perform physical labor.<sup>54</sup> Both parties agree that Lige's various other co-workers, who are all  
9 male, did field work, so a reasonable trier of fact could conclude that Clark County allowed  
10 Haynes to maintain her position as an engineering technician without performing physical labor  
11 at least in part because she was a female. Whether Haynes did or did not perform comparable  
12 physical labor is a genuine issue of fact for a jury to decide. Clark County argues only that  
13 Haynes performed the same amount of work. It doesn't argue that it had a legitimate,  
14 nondiscriminatory reason for disparate treatment, so the burden never shifted back to Lige to  
15 show pretext. Accordingly, I decline to grant summary judgment on this sex-discrimination  
16 claim.

17 Lige fails to establish a genuine issue of fact relating to his two other proffered  
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19 <sup>49</sup> *Id.* 11:12–16.

20 <sup>50</sup> ECF No. 100-3 at 17 (60:4–19 of the transcript).

21 <sup>51</sup> ECF No. 108 at 4 (citing ECF No. 109-9 at 4, ¶ 13).

22 <sup>52</sup> *Id.*

23 <sup>53</sup> ECF No. 111-1 at 2:20–21 ("Mr. Bramley's work ethic was not the best, and he was prone to  
24 malingerer.").

25 <sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 3:13–17 ("Ms. Haynes stated openly and repeatedly that she would get the open position  
26 but would not perform the same back-breaking labor that Mr. Lige performs. I was on the panel  
27 along with Mr. Lige that conducted the interviews for the open position. At the interview, Ms.  
28 Haynes again repeated she would not perform the same physical labor as Mr. Lige and would not  
go out into the field.").

1 justifications, and the statement from the two co-workers to Haynes and the pattern-of-sex-  
2 discrimination bases are not pled anywhere in the complaint. So, Lige may proceed with this  
3 claim only on the theory that Clark County required Lige to perform more strenuous work than a  
4 female employee in his same position.

5 **D. Retaliation**

6 Lige claims that Clark County, in retaliation for his consistent complaints of workplace  
7 discrimination, forced Lige to work in a hostile work environment and refused to promote him.<sup>55</sup>  
8 Nevada and federal law both prohibit employers from retaliating against an employee “because  
9 he has opposed any practice made an unlawful employment practice by [Title VII or Chapter 613  
10 of the Nevada Revised Statutes], or because he has made a charge, testified, assisted, or  
11 participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under [those statutes].”<sup>56</sup>  
12 “To establish retaliation, the plaintiff must show: (1) [he] was engaged in a protected activity; (2)  
13 [he] suffered an adverse employment action; and (3) a causal link exists between the protected  
14 activity and the adverse action.”<sup>57</sup>

15 Basically, the adverse-employment-action element of this claim encapsulates the mode of  
16 retaliation, i.e. hostile work environment, failure to promote. The plaintiff must show that his  
17 protected activity was *the* but-for cause of his employer’s adverse employment action.<sup>58</sup> Under  
18 the *McDonnell Douglas* framework, if Lige can establish a *prima facie* case, Clark County must  
19 articulate a legitimate, non-retaliatory reason for the adverse action.<sup>59</sup> Clark County concedes  
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21 <sup>55</sup> ECF Nos. 26 at 19–21; 108 at 20–23.  
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23 <sup>56</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-3(a); NEV. REV. STAT. § 613.340(1).

24 <sup>57</sup> *Van Pelt v. Skolnik*, 897 F. Supp. 2d 1031, 1044 (D. Nev. 2012), *aff’d sub nom., Van Pelt v.*  
25 *Nevada, ex rel. Nevada Dep’t of Corr.*, 637 Fed. Appx. 307 (9th Cir. 2016).

26 <sup>58</sup> *Kennedy v. UMC Univ. Med. Ct.*, 2016 WL 4497062, at \*5 (D. Nev. Aug. 25, 2016) (citing  
27 *Univ. of Texas Sw. Med. Ctr. v. Nassar*, 133 S. Ct. 2517, 2533 (2013)).

28 <sup>59</sup> *See Schultz v. Wells Fargo Bank, NA*, 970 F. Supp. 2d 1039, 1062 (D. Or. 2013) (citing  
*Westendorf v. West Coast Contractors of Nevada, Inc.*, 712 F.3d 417, 425 (9th Cir. 2013)).

1 that Lige engaged in protected activity,<sup>60</sup> so the appropriate inquiries are: (1) whether Lige has  
2 shown that he suffered an adverse employment action and (2) whether his protected activity was  
3 *the* but-for cause of that action.

4 **1. Hostile work environment**

5 The first question is whether Clark County engaged in conduct that was sufficiently  
6 “severe and pervasive” to create a hostile work environment that constitutes an adverse  
7 employment action. Clark County argues that Lige suffered no adverse employment action  
8 because he received favorable performance reviews and annual salary raises, and he is still  
9 employed with the County. But, as I explained in section C(1), *supra*, Lige has alleged and  
10 supported with evidence enough facts that would allow a reasonable jury to find that his work  
11 environment was hostile.

12 The next issue is whether Lige’s workplace-discrimination complaints were the but-for  
13 cause of that conduct. Clark County argues that Lige fails to show any causal connection  
14 between his 2015 charge of discrimination with the Nevada Equal Rights Commission and an  
15 adverse employment action. Lige responds that he has been engaging in protected activity since  
16 2010, and he proposes 20 instances of protected activity—some of which do not qualify as Title  
17 VII-protected activity.<sup>61</sup> He adds that “[c]lose temporal proximity between [his] protected  
18 activities . . . and the actions Clark County took against [him] . . . provide[s] sufficient evidence  
19 of causation to overcome summary judgment.”<sup>62</sup>

20 But close temporal proximity alone is not enough to meet the heightened but-for-  
21 causation standard required of retaliation claims. Lige must show that his protected activity was  
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23 <sup>60</sup> ECF No. 100 at 6–7.

24 <sup>61</sup> Title VII protects only those actions that oppose conduct made unlawful by Title VII:  
25 discriminating against employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or  
26 to retaliate against employees that oppose discrimination on one of those bases. *See* 42 U.S.C. §  
27 2000e-2(a) and 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-3(a). Lige’s complaints about not being able to use a truck  
with a crane on it to lift news racks do not, as a matter of law, qualify as protected activities.

28 <sup>62</sup> ECF No. 108 at 29.

1 the one and only cause of an adverse employment action to proceed, and with this argument, he  
2 fails to do so. I therefore grant summary judgment in Clark County's favor on this hostile-work-  
3 environment-retaliation claim. This holding does not, however, preclude Lige from pursuing a  
4 hostile-work-environment theory for his racial-discrimination claim.

5       **2.     Failure to promote**

6       It is undisputed that Lige was not promoted to two positions that he applied for, so there  
7 can be no legitimate argument that he did not suffer an adverse employment action.<sup>63</sup> But the  
8 County invalidates Lige's but-for-causation showing by providing legitimate justifications for its  
9 decisions not to promote him.<sup>64</sup> Lige applied for three promotions.<sup>65</sup> He received the first  
10 promotion and did not show up for the interview for the second promotion, and, although he met  
11 the minimum requirements for the third promotion, he was not nearly as qualified for the position  
12 as the chosen candidate.<sup>66</sup> Lige does not respond to these points, and his silence prevents him  
13 from establishing a genuine issue of material fact.

14       Accordingly, I grant summary judgment on this failure-to-promote-retaliation claim. This  
15 holding does not, however, preclude Lige from relying on this theory in support of his sex-  
16 discrimination claims.

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18       <sup>63</sup> See *Ray v. Henderson*, 217 F.3d 1234, 1241–42 (9th Cir. 2000) (recognizing that the Ninth  
19 Circuit holds an expansive view of the type of actions that can be considered adverse  
20 employment actions) (citing *Wyatt v. City of Boston*, 35 F.3d 13, 15–16 (1st Cir. 1994) (adverse  
21 employment actions include “demotions, disadvantageous transfers or assignments, *refusals to*  
22 *promote*, unwarranted negative job evaluations and toleration of harassment by other employees”  
23 (emphasis added)). Even circuits applying the most restrictive views still consider refusals to  
24 promote to be adverse employment actions. *Id.* at 1242 (“The Fifth and Eighth Circuits, adopting  
25 the most restrictive test, hold that only ‘ultimate employment actions’ such as hiring, firing,  
26 *promoting* and demoting constitute actionable adverse employment actions. See *Mattern v.*  
27 *Eastman Kodak Co.*, 104 F.3d 702, 707 (5th Cir. 1997) . . . ; *Ledergerber v. Stangler*, 122 F.3d  
28 1142, 1144 (8th Cir. 1997).”).

64 ECF No. 100 at 6–7.

65 ECF No. 100 at 6–7.

66 *Id.*

## **E. Civil rights**

Finally, Lige claims that his right to make and enforce an employment contract was violated because Clark County made him perform “extremely difficult physical labor” not required of his non-African-American and female counterparts. Because Clark County does not address this claim in its motion, it has failed to demonstrate a basis for summary judgment. So, this claim survives this stage of the proceedings.

## Conclusion

Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Lige's motion for leave to supplement his opposition to Clark County's motion for summary judgment [ECF No. 111] is GRANTED.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Clark County's motion for summary judgment [ECF No. 100] is **GRANTED in part and DENIED in part**. This case proceeds to trial on the following claims:

- racial discrimination resulting in a hostile work environment (claims 1 &2);
- disparate treatment sex discrimination (claims 4 & 5); and
- interference with right to make and enforce contracts (claim 17).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that **this case is referred to a magistrate judge for a mandatory settlement conference.**

DATED: February 15, 2018.

U.S. District Judge Jennifer A. Dorsey